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ENG 2850-001: Post-colonial literatures in English

Michael Loudon
Eastern Illinois University

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2850-001

Michael Loudon
English 2850.001
T 1830-2300 CH3150
Office: CH3361 (314D)
Spring 2008

Office Hours:
(in the English Dept—see below):
T 4-5; W 11-12;
or by appointment
E-mail: mdloudon@eiu.edu

Post-Colonial Literatures in English

Description: This course introduces students to the new English literatures emerging in twentieth-century Africa, India and the West Indies. Examining these literatures in their historical and cultural contexts, we shall consider themes that reveal both universal elements in human experience and the distinctive, culturally determined expressions of that experience. In other words, we shall ask how people so much like ourselves can be so different at the same time. Among the issues that we shall explore are the confrontation—perhaps, synthesis—of tradition and modernity; racism, religion and enterprise as factors in colonization; the persistence of colonial corruption in neocolonial regimes; the role of literature in creating national identity; the uses of oral tradition in shaping written literature; and, the rise of English as a global language. We shall read selected texts from different regions in Africa, among them Chinua Achebe, Bessie Head, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Okot p'Bitek, and Nobel Prize winners Wole Soyinka and Nadine Gordimer. From the West Indies, we shall read novels by V. S. Naipaul and Earl Lovelace, and poetry by Derek Walcott and Kwame Dawes; from India, we shall read a novel by Arundhati Roy.

Prerequisite and Electronic Writing Portfolio Submissions: Students must have completed English 1002G or its equivalent before enrolling in ENG 2705, a "writing intensive" course. Sophomores and juniors may elect to submit an essay from ENG 2705 to their portfolios.

Requirements: The course format will be lecture and discussion; the course requirements will be two six-to-eight-page essays (40%); a midterm (15%) and final essay examination (25%); and, active preparation and participation in the course (20%).

Texts and supplementary materials:

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1958.
Gordimer, Nadine. *July's People*. New York: Penguin, 1981.
Head, Bessie. *When Rain Clouds Gather*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1968.
Lovelace, Earl. *The Dragon Can't Dance*. London: Longman, 1979.
Naipaul, V. S. *Guerrillas*. New York: Random House/Vintage, 1975.
p'Bitek, Okot. *The Song of Lawino and The Song of Ocol*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, [1966 & 1967] 1984.
Soyinka, Wole. *Kongi's Harvest*. Oxford, England: Oxford UP, 1967. (In *Collected Plays 2*: 59-141.)
Thiong'o, Ngugi wa. *The River Between*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1965.
Walcott, Derek. *Remembrance and Pantomime*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980. [handouts]

(Various handouts will be distributed throughout the term; if you're absent one week, please secure them ASAP.)

English Office Hours: Phone: 6312 / Office: Coleman Hall 3361(314D)
mdloudon@eiu.edu; T 4-5; W 11-12; or by appointment
African American Studies Office Hours: Phone: 5719
Office: Blair Hall 3165 MWF: 1-2 and or by appointment

(I prefer appointments at both offices; necessary attendance at meetings that are as yet unscheduled will probably require, from time to time, my absence during office hours at both offices. Please avoid inconvenience by checking before just showing up. Voice mail works at both phone numbers, and both the Department and the Program have secretaries who will take messages. Thanks for your patience.)

General Policies:

Grading Standards: I shall follow the EIU English Department Guidelines, distributed in class. In all cases, I shall use a plus and minus system to distinguish, say, a high B from a low one.

Attendance: I do take roll, and I evaluate attendance only indirectly in the context of your participation in the course.

Conferences: These are at your request unless I ask to see you. Please ask for help as soon as you feel you need it; please don't wait until the last couple of weeks of class.

Submission of work: Essays should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, titled and indicate the following: name, date, course and section number. Exercises and quizzes must be legible.

Late Essays: For each day that the essay is late, the letter grade will fall by one full grade: an A essay due on Thursday will be an F by the next Thursday. If there are particular difficulties, please see me.

Plagiarism: The English Department Policy

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and the representation of them as one's own original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)--has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

Information for students with disabilities:

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Student Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.